

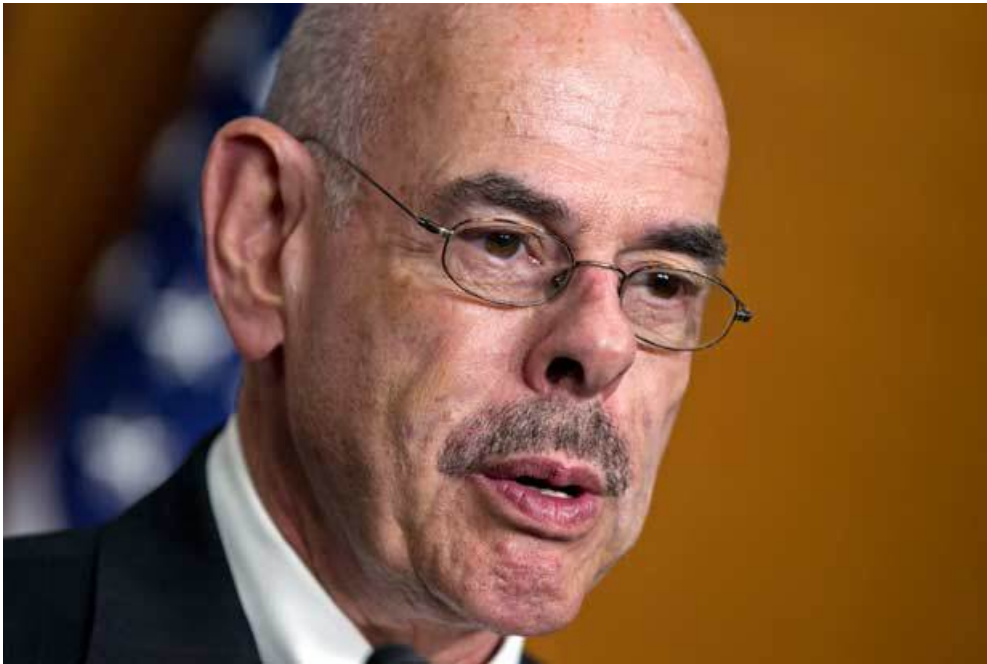
The Ballot 2014

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Obamacare Champion Rep. Henry Waxman Will Retire

Waxman is stepping aside after 2014.



Rep. Henry A. Waxman, D-Calif., will retire following the 2014 midterm elections after serving 20 terms in Congress.

By Lauren Fox

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Rep. Henry Waxman of California, a 20-term congressman and fierce defender of the Affordable Care Act, will retire from Congress.

Waxman is the seventh Democrat and 17th member in the House to announce he will step aside after the 2014 midterm elections. The 74-year-old, who has overseen the passage of major liberal policy accomplishments from Obamacare to the strengthening of the Clean Air Act, said he has grown tired of the stalemate in Congress.

"There are elements of Congress today that I do not like. I abhor the extremism of the Tea Party Republicans," Waxman said in a statement. "I am embarrassed that the greatest legislative body in the world too often operates in a partisan intellectual vacuum, denying science, refusing to listen to experts, and ignoring facts."

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Since being elected in 1974, Waxman has served as the chairman and now-ranking member of the House Energy & Commerce Committee and chairman of the Committee on Oversight & Government

Reform. But some of his biggest strides have come in the arena of public health. In the 1980s, Waxman fought to extend health care coverage to children living below the poverty line. He helped secure millions in funding to combat the AIDS epidemic and in a slew of hearings, took tobacco executives to task for covering up the harmful effects of cigarettes and adding addictors to their products to hook Americans.

"Expanding health coverage to those in need has been one of my driving passions," Waxman said.

Waxman's foresight on environmental issues is one of the key elements that will enable President Barack Obama to adjust renewable energy and fuel standards, even without the help or approval of Congress. Expansions to the Clean Air Act gave Obama and other presidents the ability to take actions unilaterally in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Waxman's Southern California district stretches across wealthy Bel Air and Malibu. The district is solidly Democratic and will certainly see a competitive primary erupt. After that, because of California's top-two system, the district likely will have two Democrats again facing off in the general election. In California, the two candidates who garner the most votes in the primary go on to run against each other, regardless of party affiliation.

While Waxman won his 2012 election with 54 percent of the vote, his dominance in the district was slipping. Prior to 2012, Waxman typically had garnered a larger percentage.

Before Waxman retired, Marianne Williamson, a self-help author and friend of Oprah Winfrey, announced her interest in the seat. Brent Roske, a Hollywood producer with Beltway ties, also has entered the race.

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Roske told U.S. News in an emailed statement that "Waxman's service to our country has been both honorable and hard fought. As the first announced candidate in this district I look forward to the possibility of continuing his legacy of hard work for the people of California's 33rd."

Roske, who declared his candidacy as an independent, is looking now at running for the open seat as a Democrat.

Waxman did not announce what he will do after his retirement.

"I will leave the House of Representatives with my conviction intact," Waxman said. "I have learned that progress is not always easy. It can take years of dedication and struggle. But it's worth fighting for."

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